

FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPION TO RETIRE UNDEFEATED Bolivar Brown

BIG PRIZE FAILS TO LURE KILBANE INTO ACTION

Yet King of Feathers Enjoyed Fighting in Nine-Year Career as Title Holder, When His Dazzling Foot Work Won Many Laurels—Preferring to Spare Opponents, Kilbane Could Punch When Necessary, Especially When He Knocked Out Chaney in Three Rounds at Cleveland.

By Robert Edgren.

IN writing this story about Johnny Kilbane we feel that we'd better hurry, because Johnny might fight some challenger for his featherweight title and become one of the ex-champions. Johnny has held the featherweight championship for nearly nine years, and that's a long time. Too long, Johnny's challengers say, now that Kilbane is admittedly growing rather large for a featherweight and his attention is devoted principally to buying and selling real estate and collecting rents.

It took Kilbane a long time to show signs of slipping, but if declining an offer of \$30,000 in Tex Rickard's good money to defend the old title against a picked challenger isn't evidence of decline and fall from championship class, what is?

I have no trouble in remembering the time when Johnny would have been glad to fight any feather in the world for fifteen hundred or for the fun of it. If Kilbane was Kilbane he'd do it now.

Johnny may be fair, fat and thirty-one to-day, but he was the genuine and original "Fighting Mick" when he beat Abe Attell for the featherweight crown at Vernon, Cal., Feb. 22, 1912. Surest thing you know, that boy could fight anything from a Mexican wildcat to a grizzly bear and get away with it.

He had a poke like a lightning bolt and a sidestep that made his opponents miss more swings than there are on all the gates in the country. Talk about a "dancing foot!" That was Johnny Kilbane when he felt like dancing. He could hop, skip and jump around a ring in a way that would make Johnny Dundee look like a loaded truck trying to go up Fort Lee hill on an icy morning.

They could make Kilbane with a bucket of birdshot, and that's all there was to it. He invited punches, and when they arrived he simply waved them off. And all the time he was slipping and tapping and laughing and chatting and making a monkey out of the earnest young man in front of him, until people in the front row laughed so hard they fell off their seats.

PUNCH THERE WHEN WANTED. Yet, when he wanted to, Kilbane surely could fight! There was an instance of this in Jimmy Dunn's stable when he fought Joe Rivers, the sensational little Mexican slugger, who was several times within an ace of being the world's lightweight champion.

The first time Kilbane met Rivers was May 1, 1911. At that time Kilbane was just beginning to take the star part in Jimmy Dunn's stable. He had beaten several good fighters and had lost a few decisions, averaging very well. But he had no great record yet. He had lost a ten-round decision to Abe Attell, and in five years of boxing had fought perhaps 100 small fights. But he was a popular little fellow because of his speed, skill, judgment, temperament and build, and the crowd liked to look at him.

The first time Joe Rivers outboxed Kilbane and won a twenty-round decision over him. Kilbane takes great pride in the fighting ability of the Irish race, and the thought that his colors had been lowered by a Mexican stung him hard. He went East, boxed a couple of short bouts and returned to the Coast to fight Rivers again in September.

During the early rounds of that fight Rivers had the better of it. The Mexican was a wildcat for action when he was in the ring, and he had beaten Kilbane before. But under the falling blows that broke through his guard and caught him in the face, he held his own, and he had beaten Kilbane before. But under the falling blows that broke through his guard and caught him in the face, he held his own, and he had beaten Kilbane before.

That made Kilbane's reputation. He beat Frankie Conley in 20 rounds at Vernon, went East and fought a no-decision 12-round with Charlie White, returned to California and was matched with Abe Attell.

At that time Attell was regarded as an absolutely invincible featherweight champion. He had held the title for many years, and when there were no more featherweight contenders good enough to give him a fight he took on the best of the lightweights. He was wonderfully skilful and he could fight on even terms with the best lightweight, while still a featherweight himself. Among the great lightweights he met were Owen Moran, Tommy Murphy, Charlie White, Matt Wells, K. O. Brown, Eddie Hanlon, Eddie Kelly, Bill Watson, Freddy Welsh and Battling Nelson.

When Bat was world's champion in the lightweight class Attell fought him for the title in a six-round draw in Philadelphia and a 15-round draw in California. And he rushed Nelson and fought him too to see all the way at that.

ATTILL GOT MAD. Attell naturally agreed to the experts, an easy victor over young Johnny Kilbane. Imagine the surprise in the packed arena at Vernon

then, when Kilbane outboxed Abe Attell and had him floundering like a stranded porpoise.

Kilbane danced around Attell and Attell plunged at him until he was leg weary. It was the first time in his life. Abe had been outfooted and "shown up" and he completely lost his temper and tried fouling and roughing. And Kilbane fooled him, laughed at him, and jabbed him until Abe's head bounced around like the head of a rag doll in a ball throwing parlor at Coney Island.

Kilbane won the decision and the championship. Attell "battered" all over the country, but the defeat finished him as a great fighter and he never was good for much afterward. As for Kilbane, he went to New York and boxed Frankie Thurnham around. Frankie, like a skittering shadow. As champion he contented himself with outboxing everybody, and when he had tapped and danced successfully for four years people grew weary of seeing him, and featherweight rivals forgot that he ever had a punch.

One of these, George Chaney of Baltimore, became famous as the "Knockout King," having knocked out nearly all of his opponents for six years. Chaney, however, was a tough and Chaney's manager abused Johnny through the sporting papers for months. Kilbane seemed unwilling to meet the famous K. O. boy, but at last he was nagged into a match at Matt Hinkel's club (Matt Hinkel refereeing), widely advertised as a featherweight championship fight, at weight.

Just before that fight Johnny wrote me a letter in which he said: "I think I can't hit any more. I can hit harder than ever, but I always prefer winning on points. Because I don't like to risk hurting anybody. This time I'm going to let the punch go, and I'll knock this fellow Chaney out in a hurry."

Kilbane made a good job of Chaney for two rounds and knocked him cold in the third with a single punch on the chin. After this he was busy again for two more rounds, outpointing him in no-decision bouts.

Then Kilbane made his first ring mistake. He went after the light-weight champion, Billy Leonard. Leonard was a new champion and one of the cleverest and best in his class. The fight was in the ball park at Philadelphia and drew a tremendous crowd. Leonard outlasted Kilbane for the first six rounds, but he was always a good small man. Kilbane was knocked out in the third round.

After the fight Leonard and Kilbane were called into military service, accepting appointments as army boxing instructors, and both did splendid work—Leonard at Camp Sherman and Kilbane at Camp Sherman, in Ohio.

Since the war Kilbane has boxed a few bouts, showing much of his old skill, but lacking some of the flashing speed he earned a place in the boxers' Hall of Fame.

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Princeton to Have Lacrosse. PRINCETON, N. J., Feb. 5.—Princeton will have a lacrosse team next year for competition in the intercollegiate circuit, provided enough interest is shown here this spring to warrant the adoption of the game.

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